This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-16 (Canceled)

17. (Previously presented) A server for use in an automated meter reading system, the automated meter reading system having a plurality of utility meters for measuring and recording metered data, a plurality of nodes, each node communicating with and associated with a number of designated meters to read the meter data, a plurality of gateways, each gateway communicating with and associated with a number of the nodes to receive the meter data, and a data network interfaced to communicate with the plurality of gateways,

the server being interfaced with the data network to receive the meter data read from the gateways,

the server storing first electronic data representative of meter assignments to at least one node and second electronic data electronically keyed to said first electronic data and representative of node assignments to at least one gateway,

the server grouping together a plurality of nodes to define groups of noninterfering nodes based at least in part on the node assignments, wherein each group of noninterfering nodes comprises a group in which (a) no inbound transmission from any node in the group interferes with any inbound transmission from any other node in the group, and (b) no inbound transmission from any meter associated with any node in the group interferes with any inbound transmission from any meter associated with any other node in the group, ~~and~~

the server also grouping together a plurality of gateways to define sets of noninterfering gateways, each set of noninterfering gateways comprising a set in which (a) no inbound transmission from any node associated with any gateway in the group interferes with any inbound transmission from any node associated with any other gateway in the group; and (b) no inbound transmission from any meter associated with any node associated with any gateway in the group interferes with any transmission from any meter associated with any node associated with any other gateway in the group, and

the server broadcasting a request for meter data sequentially to each group of non-interfering nodes.

18. (Previously Presented). The server of claim 17, wherein said server stores information related to the topology of gateways, nodes, meters, and their respective interconnections and/or interfaces in a topology database.

19. (Previously Presented) The server of claim 18, wherein said topology database is initially populated generated based on a geographic location of every meter, node, and gateway in the system.

20. (Previously Presented) The server of claim 18, wherein cells are defined, each of said cells defining a plurality of meters that each communicate with a particular node.

21. (Previously Presented) The server of claim 20, wherein said ~~host~~ server determines which nodes communicate with which gateways in accordance with said cells.

22. (Previously presented) The server of claim 17, wherein said noninterfering nodes and gateways are defined in a topology database by like identifiers, and wherein said server addresses noninterfering ones of said nodes and gateways by sending a command containing said like identifiers.